

England Church of

A MODEST
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
DANGER
OF THE
CHURCH.

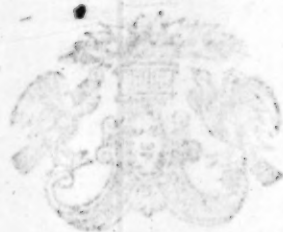


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L O N D O N :

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A MODEST
Enquiry, &c.



BEFORE I can either affirm or deny *the Church to be in Danger*, I must understand the *Meaning of the Expression*; in order whereunto, I desire an Answer to Three Questions.

First, *What is here meant by the Church?* Are we hereby to understand the *Universal or Catholick Church*, as
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comprehending *all that profess the Christian Faith throughout the World?* Or the *Protestant Church*, as it includes all those who have renounced the Errors of the Church of Rome? Or the Church of Rome it self? Which is no impertinent Question, considering how heartily the *Papists* join in the Cry of the Church's Danger: Or the *Episcopal Church*, taking in the *Laity*, as well as *Clergy*, who live in the Communion of the Church, as by Law Established in *England and Ireland?* Or the *Clergy alone*, as a Body of Men distinct from the *Laity*, and supposed to have a different Interest from theirs? Or, *Lastly*, that Part of the *Episcopal Church* which commonly goes by the Name of *High-Church*, to which the Name of Church seems by some in a manner to be appropriated? Let the Meaning of this Word *Church* be fixed and determined, so as that we may be able to form a distinct and clear Notion of it; and then

A Second Question arises to be answered; namely, *What is it of which the Church is in Danger? Or wherein does this Danger consist?* Is it that all *Religion* whatever, or *Christianity* in particular, is like, if not to be wholly banished the World, yet to be confined to a very small Number of Men? Or that *Popery* may get Ground, and in Time over-run us? Or that *Episcopacy* may be laid aside, and the *Acts of Uniformity*, with other Laws made for the Security of our Church, be repealed? Or the *Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction* abolished, or unreasonably discountenanced? Or the *Bishops and Clergy* deprived of those Honours and Revenues to which at present they are by Law entitled? Or is it something different from all these Things, that is so much apprehended and feared? Let those who raise or keep up the Cry of the *Church's Danger*, speak plainly, and tell us what this *Danger* is, of which they are thus apprehensive; and then,
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and not till then, we may be able to know whether they are in the right; and every honest Churchman ought to join with them.

But if they would thoroughly convince us of the *Danger of the Church*, and have therein an *honest Design*, (*not to exasperate the Minds of Men against His Majesty's Person and Government*, but to put us all upon seeking for the *true Remedy*, or *Way to prevent the Evils* which they apprehend and fear;) There is a

Third Question also to be answered, which is, *What is the Cause of the Church's Danger?* Or, *From whence is it that this Danger arises?* And since to know the *Cause* of an Evil, contributes very much to the *Prevention* or *Cure* of it, it will be very proper to branch out this Question, upon which I now am, into several and more particular Enquiries.

First

First then, Has His Majesty King
G E O R G E, given the Church any
just Apprehension of Danger from him?
 Has He in the least attempted the Al-
 teration so much as of one single *Ec-*
clesiastical Law? Has He hindered or
 obstructed, or so much as discounte-
 nanced any *Bishop*, or *Clergyman* what-
 ever, in the Discharge of his Office
 or Function? Has He invaded any
 Part of the Church's Revenue? Or
 bestowed her *Preferments* upon Persons
 of Evil Morals, or Principles? (Ex-
 cept we will call those Principles *Evil*,
 which justify the late *Happy Revo-*
lution, and assert the *Legal Title*, by
 which King **W I L L I A M** and Queen
A N N E enjoyed the Crown, and
 His Present **M A J E S T Y** conti-
 nues so to do, in Opposition to
 that pretended *Indefeasible Hereditary*
Right, which has neither the Law of
 God, nor that of the Land, to sup-
 port it; and (if admitted) can only
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serve the Interest of the *Pretender* and other *Papists*;) Or, *Lastly*, Has He ever yet rejected any Petition or Request which they of the *Established Church* have at any Time made to Him in her Behalf? Or what is it which His Majesty has done or omitted, that should give the *Church* the least Umbrage of *Danger from Him*? Let the *Particular Instance* be produced; or else let all *Insinuations* of this Nature, be with Shame for ever discountenanced and rejected. And all these Interrogatories which I have put with Relation to *His Majesty*, may be repeated and renewed, as to those who have the Administration of the Publick Affairs immediately under Him; as also the Present *Parliaments* of Great Britain and Ireland.

True it is, that in the *House of Commons in Ireland*, a Clause was inserted in the *Heads of a Bill*, which seemed a little to favour the *Dissenters*, by
grant-

granting them, for *Ten Years only*, a Liberty to bear Arms, and take Commissions, as well in the *Standing Army*, as the *Militia*. It is not worth while, in this short Paper, to give a History of this *Clause*: But when, with a little Alteration, (I cannot say whether for the better or the worse) it came back in *Form* to the Parliament; the *Bill* was thrown out by the *Commons* themselves, (for in *Ireland* they have no Power to *Alter a Bill*.) And though this was done on Account of *another Clause* that was inserted in it; yet it is well known that a great many, if not most of the *Commons* were much influenced in giving their Votes, by this first-mentioned *Clause*, in favour of the *Dissenters*; into which many Members of the House began to find that they had a little too hastily run, (and that in a very extraordinary Juncture) without sufficiently considering what might be the probable Con-

sequences of it. But if the *Bill*, with this *Clause* in it, had happened to pass the *House of Commons*, it would, without doubt, have been thrown out by the *Lords*; in whom indeed, there seemed to be a Disposition to make all peaceable and honest *Dissenters* as safe and easy as might be, in their Persons and private Fortunes; but by no Means to hazard a *Convulsion* in the Nation, by bringing them into any Share of the Civil or Military Power. And as for the Votes of the *House of Commons*, (after the *Bill* was thrown out) for the indemnifying of all such *Dissenters* as had acted, or should continue to act as Officers in the *Militia*, the Design of them was only, that no Man should be discouraged, who had put to his Hand for the *Publick Help*, in a Time of *Common Danger*. But to return from this Digression.

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The Members of the *Established Church*, are commonly ranked under Two Denominations, *viz.* *Whigs*, or *Low-Church*; and *Tories*, or *High-Church*. I trouble not my self at present about the little Ground there is, amongst honest Men, for this Distinction; but proceed to enquire,

Secondly, *Whether the Church be in Danger from the former of these*; I mean the *Whigs*, or *Low-Church-Men*. I do not find that these are suspected of any Design knowingly to make way for *Popery*: But the Outcry against them is, that they are too favourable to the *Dissenters* and *Presbytery*: I demand then, Are not the *Bishops* and *Clergy* that go under this Denomination, as exactly conformable to the Rules and Institutions of the *Church*, and as industrious and diligent in the Discharge of their respective Offices and Duties; and have

have they not altogether as well vindicated the Rites, Ceremonies, Liturgy, Discipline, Government and Worship amongst us established, as those of the other Sort? And that not only from the *Pulpit*, but the *Press* also? They have not, it may be, given any bitter or opprobrious Language to the Dissenters: But whoever has heard their Sermons, or read their Writings upon this Occasion, must needs allow that they argue as well and solidly against them, both from Reason and Scripture, as any Men whatsoever. And as for the *Laity* of the same Appellation, whoever enquires into their Behaviour, will find them at least as constant at their Parish Churches, as orderly and regular there, (and also in their Families) in the Worship of God, as frequent and devout at the Holy Communion, and as Just, Sober, Peaceable, and Charitable in the whole Course of their
Lives,

Lives, as their Neighbours, who find so much fault with them. It deserves therefore well to be considered, whether these very Men, against whom such a Clamour has been, and by some is still made, are not rather, under God, a great Defence and Support to the Church, than any way *Dangerous* to it.

But *Thirdly*, Can it as truly be said of *some* of the *Tory* or *High-Church* Party, (for I am far from including them all,) that they have not been, or that still they are not the Occasion of much Danger to that *Church*, for which they appear with so much Zeal to stand up? It is well known what a Hatred the *Pope* and his Partisans have all along born to the Church of *England*, as being the very Bulwark, and great Support of the *Reformation*; and how many ways, both open

open and secret, they have made use of, in order to ruin and destroy her. Every one also knows that the Pretender is a zealous Papist, and that there are many of the same Sort, who (immediately after him) do set up the Claim of Proximity of Blood to the Crown of these Realms. Every Advance then that Popery makes amongst us, or the Pretender, or other Popish Prince, towards the Throne of these Dominions, most certainly brings our Church into a proportionable Degree of Danger: Nor is it of the least Consideration to say, that we have the Oath even of a Popish King, to secure us, as long as we know that the Pope pretends to a Power in some Cases to dispense with Oaths; and it is a Rule in his Canon-Law, that *An Oath taken contrary to the Good of the Church, is of no Obligation*: Juramentum contra utilitatem Ecclesiasticam præstitum,

tum, non tenet. *Decret. Greg. Lib. 2. Tit. 24. Cap. 27.*

Here then it may be asked, Have not some *High-Church-Men* zealously espoused certain *Doctrines*, which they cannot say are necessary to Salvation, or that they have been determined by our Church, so as to lay any *Obligation* upon them to teach them, and yet have a manifest *Tendency at least towards giving Countenance* to some of the *Errors of the Church of Rome*? (See *Bishop Burnet's Preface to the New Edition of his Pastoral Care.*) Were not they the only *Protestants*, who, in the *Reign of King Charles the Second*, opposed the *Bill* for excluding the then *Duke of York* from succeeding to the *Crown*, although it was then sufficiently known that he was a *Papist*; and by our *Constitution*, the *Limitation of the Succession to the Crown*, is subject to the *Laws and Statutes of the Realm*,

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(See 13 Eliz. Cap. 1.) Was it not in his Favour that they procured a Decree of a certain famous University, (July 21. 1683.) by some Part of which, the very *Natural Rights* of Mankind are subverted, and *Subjects* made no better than *Slaves* to their Prince? And also about the same time promoted an *Address* in a Sister University, wherein they declare, That *their Sovereign* comes to be so, by a *Fundamental Hereditary Right of Succession*, which no Religion, no Law, no Fault or Forfeiture can alter, or [so much as] diminish? And although in less than Six Years after, Nature rebelled against Principle; and (to avoid not only Popery, but also that same Slavery for which they had lately been so very zealous) they generally took Part with King *WILLIAM*, and swore Allegiance to him; yet how soon after did very many of them (some by open Speeches, and
more

more by broad Insinuations) decry that *Revolution*, to which, under God, they lately with Joy ascribed their Deliverance? Represent that King, for whose coming and Success, they still continue once a Year to give God publick Thanks, as no better than an *Usurper*? And openly declare for *Hereditary Right*, as the only just Title to the Crown, in direct Opposition to that Right which was commonly called *Parliamentary*, as being grounded upon express *Acts of Parliament*? Nor can it be pretended that this was done to serve the late *Queen*, who on both Sides was by Oath recognized as *Rightful and Lawful Queen*; and much less the *House of Hanover*, who claimed no such Right but by *Act of Parliament*: Neither could it be the least Service to any but the *Pretender*, or others of the *Popish Line*, who without this same *Hereditary*

editary Right, had not the least *Colour* of a Pretence to the Throne.

And within a short Time after, His Majesty *King G E O R G E* was placed upon the Throne; Who were they that help'd to spread Malicious and Treasonable *Libels* against Him, to make Him odious to his Subjects? That encouraged Riotous and Seditious *Mobs*, which in many Places Tumultuously arose in Opposition to His Authority? And at last fomented, and took Part, some of them, in that horrid *Rebellion* which was raised against him? And all this in Behalf, not only of a *Pretender against Law*, but a *Bigotted Papist*, bred up under a late Neighbouring King; whose Behaviour to all his own Subjects, and especially those of the *Reformed Religion*, was such as should never make any *Protestant* desirous to live under a Prince of his instructing. Let all this be well considered; and then let it be demanded,

demanded, Whether the Church be in Danger from the *Tories*, or *High-Churchmen*?

Fourthly, Is the Church in any Danger from the *Protestant Dissenters*? I make no doubt indeed, but the *Dissenters* would gladly get all the Power of the Nation, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, into their own Hands, if they could: And if they should ever succeed in such a Design (which God forbid) although the Consequence would not be the sad Choice, either of embracing *Idolatry*, or *burning at the Stake*; (which will be the Case, if *Popery* prevails,) yet our Primitive Church-Government would be subverted, the Apostolick Order of Episcopacy abolished, and our excellent Liturgy, with the decent and orderly Rites and Ceremonies prescribed by it, entirely laid aside; Ecclesiastical Tyranny set up, and a Way of Publick

lick Worship, neither so decent, nor on many Accounts convenient, introduced. But the Question is, *Whether there is any Likelihood of their succeeding in an Attempt of this Nature?* Truth and Justice are manifestly on the Side of the *Established Church*: In her Communion there is nothing wanting, that is *any way necessary to Salvation*, nor any Thing required that is *Sinful, or destructive of it*: Neither can the Wit of Man find out a good Reason *why Lawful Authority* should not, for Peace and Conscience-sake, be always submitted to, in such Things as in themselves are *lawful or indifferent*. Nor have the *Dissenters* any *Foreign Assistance*, (as the *Papists* have) which either on a Religious or Political Account, will engage on their Side. For all the *Reformed Churches* beyond the Sea, condemn their Separation from the *Church of England*. Which way then can they bring our Church

Church into *Danger* ; I mean, if we keep united amongst our selves? *Force* they have none that we need fear ; the *Laws* and the *Civil Power* being on our Side: And as for their *Arguments*, they have all been abundantly confuted, beyond any tolerable Reply that has been, or can be made. Let them then enjoy that *Liberty of Conscience* which really is the *Natural Right* of every Man, and be kept easy in their Persons and private Fortunes, as long as they behave themselves peaceably, and with due Submission to the Government ; and then the few *Restless Spirits* that are amongst them, (for few I take them to be, in respect of those of them who mean well, though much mistaken) will be deprived of the only Argument which otherwise will be left them, whereby to stir up their People against the *Established Church*.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, Is the Church in any Danger from the Papists? If God, for our Sins, should suffer Popery to prevail amongst us; the avowed Principles of the Church of Rome, with relation to Hereticks, (as they reckon all Protestants to be) and their constant Practice, where-ever they have had Power, abundantly assure us how little Mercy we are to expect from them. Here then also the only Question is, What Probability there may be of their bringing that Ruin and Destruction upon us, for which we very well know they want nothing but an Opportunity? They have abundance of Emissaries lurking amongst us: Their People have always shewn themselves ready, at the Command of their Priests and Friars, to Destroy and Murder Hereticks, as well by secret Plots, as open Wars and Rebellions; and all the Foreign Powers of that Profession, are by their Principles

principles obliged to give their Help; although some of them are for the present restrained by *Reasons of State*, and *Political Considerations*. What therefore can be the Meaning of it, That they who make the *loudest Outcry* of the Danger of the Church from the *Dissenters*, are scarce ever heard to speak a Word of the *Papists*, except now and then, perhaps, *a little in their Favour*.

Sixthly, Is the Church in any Danger from the Universities? These are the *Seminaries*, where many of our *Nobility and Gentry*, and almost all our *Clergy* have their Education, and commonly imbibe their Principles: I demand then, Is all necessary Care there taken to breed up Youth, both in the Knowledge and Practice of *sound Morality*, and *true Christian Piety*? And are the necessary *Doctrines of Religion* kept pure and unmix'd, not only from *Error*, but also from all
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those foolish and unlearned Questions, prophane and vain Babblings, Strifes of Words, Philosophy, and vain Deceit, and Oppositions of Science falsely so called; against which St. Paul gives such frequent and earnest Cautions? If so; Then we may well conclude, that the Generality of those who are bred up in these Learned Societies, will always prove both an Ornament and Support to that Church of which they are Members. But if instead of solid Learning, wholesome Morality, sincere Piety, and pure Religion, the young Students do commonly turn their Minds and Thoughts to *Wit* and *Airiness*, to *Pamphlets* and *Politicks*, and to all those Notions and Opinions, which may serve a Party, and ingratiate themselves with those who are of it; What can be expected from them, as they come Abroad into the World, but that they will involve both the Church and State in perpetual Quarrels and Contentions, and thereby bring the one as well as the other, into the

the greatest Danger? Universities and Schools of Learning, if rightly managed, are (no doubt) of the greatest Benefit and Advantage to the Publick: And indeed without them, we should soon sink into Ignorance and Barbarity. But if the *Fountains* themselves are poisoned and corrupted, What Misery and Confusion must needs overspread that Land, which is constantly watered by the *Streams* that flow from them alone?

Lastly, Is the Church in Danger from Atheists, Infidels, and Men of wicked and profligate Lives? These, I own, do a great deal of Mischief in the World; and it were much to be wished, that all proper ways were taken both to reclaim them, and prevent the farther Growth of Impiety. But the *Danger* which arises from such Persons as these, is not particular to one only Church, but alike to all that seriously profess Christianity.

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I shall perhaps be told (according to the Proverb.) that a *Fool may ask more Questions than a Wise Man can Answer.* I grant it. But if a Man cannot tell his own Meaning, he is no *Wise Man*: And if he can, but will not, in such a Case as this, where the Good of the Publick, and the *Peace of the Church and Kingdom* are concerned; I think I may, without breach of Charity, say that he is no *Honest Man*, although *The Church, the Church*, is as often in his Mouth, as *The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord*, was of old with those very Persons who were the Occasion of its Destruction, *Jer. 7. 4.* And it is most evident, that all the Questions which I have here put, amount all together to no more but this, *What is the plain and distinct Meaning of this loud and confused Outcry that is made, of the Danger of the Church?*

But let me be never so much censured of *Folly*, yet I will not conclude this Paper, without putting one Question

Question more ; namely, If the Church is in Danger, what is to be done, and by whom, to bring it out of Danger, and to avert those Evils, wherewith it either is, or is pretended to be threatened?

Besides our hearty Prayers to God, that he would protect and bless his Church ; there are but Two Things in the Power of Man, whereby we can contribute to its Safety and Prosperity ; that is to say, either by the making of good Laws in its Favour ; or taking sufficient Care that those Laws which are so made, be duly kept and observed.

As to the First of these ; If there be any Law wanting, that might be for the true Benefit, and Advantage of the Church ; that is to say, really useful towards the promoting of that End, for which alone the Christian Church was first Instituted and Founded by God ; let it be proposed, and a Trial made, whether

whether our Legislature will not readily come into it. But if, under the Pretence of *securing the Church*, it be intended that they who Dissent from it, should be deprived of that Liberty of Conscience, which is a *Natural Right* belonging to all Mankind; and for which, at the last great Day, they shall be accountable to God alone: Or that the *Clergy*, who make but a *Part of the Church*, and were from the Beginning appointed, not for any *Temporal Benefit* of their own; but for the *perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ*, Eph. 4. 12. That this Order of Men, I say, should have greater Interest, and more Power than what our *Constitution* has already given them; or is any way necessary to the due Discharge, as well as proper Encouragement of their *Holy Function*: It ought well to be considered by those who are in *Authority*, how far it may be for the Good of the *whole Community*, (of which every Part

is

is committed to their Care) to comply with such Aims or Desires as these.

Then as for the other Thing necessary for the Safety and Prosperity of the Church ; I mean the keeping and observing of such Laws as are already made for that Purpose ; it is worth considering, whether they who make such an Outcry about *the Church's Danger*, are *more strict and careful* in the Observation both of the *Laws of God*, and the *Ecclesiastical Laws of the Land*, than others of the same Communion, who yet do not think the Danger to be so great as some would represent it.

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